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Research delves into global warming, travel behavior

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NEWS RELEASE

July 20, 2007

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RESEARCH DELVES INTO GLOBAL WARMING, TRAVEL BEHAVIOR

MISSOULA –

Are people changing their travel behavior because of global warming fears?

That's one question posed in a new exploratory study by Norma Nickerson, director of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at The University of Montana. Nickerson surveyed 150 travelers from around the globe via an Internet questionnaire to obtain her results.

She found that people believe government, businesses and individuals should reduce travel because of climate-change concerns. However, in the next 12 months respondents don't plan to reduce or shorten their own travel plans because of climate change.

"The also believe scientists and not their governments in regards to global warming," Nickerson said, "but they tend to think that travel is not the place to pull back."

Respondents said they generally try to save energy at home; regularly bike, bus or carpool; and seek eco-friendly accommodations.

Of the sample group, 82 percent had taken at least one pleasure trip by plane and 90 percent had taken at least one pleasure trip by auto in the past 12 months. Only 22 percent had changed travel plans because of fuel costs, and a minority -- 16 percent -- has changed travel plans because of concerns about CO₂ emissions.

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The average age of respondents was 46.7. They were from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Europe and Asia. Fifty-six percent had graduate education, 37 percent had college education and 7 percent had partial college education.

This exploratory study reflects highly educated people who travel and therefore does not represent the general population. "It is, however, an indicator of how some travelers are thinking and behaving," Nickerson said.

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